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Speech

CLOSING REMARKS

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of the
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It is an honor to join you this evening as the work of the APEC Transportation Working Group draws to a close. For the United States to be able to host this 25th Meeting of the transportation Working Group in Washington makes this an even more special pleasure.

As international organizations go, APEC is quite young. And so it is possible for some of us to think back to the organization's founding and to the many Transportation Working Group successes that have followed. As your work here in Washington this week comes to an end, it is worth spending a moment reflecting on those successes.

APEC established the working group in 1991, when APEC itself was in its infancy. Although no organization ever experiences unalloyed success, the Working Group can boast of some tremendous achievements. We have opened aviation and maritime markets that had long been severely restricted or even completely closed to international competition. We have advanced the idea that transportation liberalization must accompany broader economic liberalization – that open markets cannot truly be open until the air, sea, road, and rail networks that link them are themselves free of artificial and anticompetitive constraints. At the same time, we have moved APEC economies towards a recognition that transportation safety is the handmaiden of transportation liberalization, and that it little serves any of our economies to open up markets if the transportation networks that connect those markets cannot consistently deliver safe and reliable service.

Most recently, we have placed transportation security at the top of the APEC agenda. Transportation security is of course a special priority for the United States, but threats to the security of Pacific Rim transportation affect us all. Indeed, the very mobility that our transportation networks give us means that a threat to transportation security in any one of our countries is very often a threat to us all. Those threats mean that we must do all that we can to safeguard our transportation systems, and our people.

As Secretary Mineta noted earlier this week, we have done all of this under the umbrella of the original Bogor goals, and we have done so through multilateral cooperation every step of the way. With its unique, collaborative method of working through disagreements and building consensus across 21 economies, APEC has earned its reputation as an international organization that gets things done.

Now, in public service, it can be tempting to get a little caught up in what *governments* are doing, and to forget that it is the *businesses* of the Pacific Rim – the freight forwarders, the airlines, the shipping lines, the truckers, and the railroads – that make this vision of safe, secure, and liberalized transportation a reality. APEC is known for welcoming private sector participation in its deliberations, and rightly so. Indeed, the long APEC tradition of referring to members as “economies” rather than “governments” reminds us that the legal and regulatory successes that this Working Group has so often achieved are realized primarily through the enhanced transportation services that they facilitate, and the economic growth that those services engender.

While you worked hard in Washington this week, you may have noticed that it is graduation time at many of our colleges and universities. Hundreds of thousands of undergraduates are receiving their baccalaureate degrees at ceremonies across the United States. Although those ceremonies celebrate the past achievements of the graduating students, they are called “commencements” to emphasize that the completion of university studies signals a *beginning*, not an end, and that new challenges await the new graduates.

In the same way, this week’s 25th meeting should not be viewed merely as a culmination of past successes, but rather as a commencement – the start of a new effort to meet the many challenges that our economies confront. Too often, despite our best efforts, our most important transportation markets remain constrained by unnecessary, anticompetitive restrictions. These impediments get in the way of economic growth, stifle innovation, and needlessly slow the essential integration that industry needs to meet the demands of their customers across the globe.

Let me give you one example. Visiting Shanghai last week, I was astonished – as always – by the tremendous vitality of the Chinese people and the economy they are building. Walking through a bustling Pudong Airport brought home to me, once again, the indispensable role that efficient, abundant transportation services play in creating economic prosperity. If airlines are not allowed to serve international points such as Shanghai with service driven not by governments but by the demands of their passengers and shippers, then economic opportunity is squandered, and the connectivity so essential to today’s global economy is frayed. That is why, while in Shanghai, I urged China to build on our landmark 2004 air services accord and move forward with the United States

to achieve truly open skies between our two nations. This kind of progress – moving forward on transportation liberalization in the service of a more open international economy – serves not only the bilateral market but the entire Asia Pacific region as well.

And even as we seek to open markets, we should also work to coordinate and improve the safety and security of the growing networks that the Working Group seeks to create. It is for this reason that the United States has urged full and timely implementation of the Secure Trade in the APEC Region initiative. Many of the goals of the “STAR” initiative are slated for implementation by the end of this year, and we urge every APEC economy to do its best to meet that deadline.

That is why the call to action that you heard this week from Secretary Mineta and the Lead Minister is so important. “Fulfilling the challenge of Bogor” by making Pacific Rim transportation systems safe and secure is no easy task, but it is essential to progress in all our economies. Success in tackling the tough issues that face us is critical for our economies and for APEC itself. That is why all of us look forward to the results that will be announced in the closing plenary tomorrow.

Let me close with just a few words about APEC’s response to the tragic Indian Ocean earthquake and the tsunamis that have struck the Asia Pacific region over the past few months.

You certainly need no lecture from me on the enormity of the disaster. Many of the economies represented here tonight were affected by it, and many others have contributed generously to relief and reconstruction. The business sector has been important as well. I want to salute all APEC economies and associated private sector groups for their response to this tragedy.

APEC itself has a role to play in the continuing recovery and reconstruction effort. We should do so in a way that leverages APEC’s unique strengths, adds real value, and avoids duplication of effort with the many other public and private organizations involved in post-tsunami reconstruction and rehabilitation. Technical assistance, rehabilitation training, risk management education, and best practices for delivering emergency aid – these are the ways in which I believe APEC can best play its part. These contributions, I believe, flow out of the fundamental principles that have characterized APEC’s work since its inception – a belief in the need for removing restrictions that limit transportation efficiency and economic growth, an insistence on working together to maintain transportation safety and security, and a tradition of multilateral collaboration.

Thanks to all of you for the time you have spent here and the work you have done. The APEC family is a unique one, bound together by a common desire for cooperation and economic prosperity. By maintaining our focus on those essential aspirations, I know we can achieve even more.

Thank you, also, for your attention at the end of another long day, and best wishes to you all as you complete your work here in Washington.

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